

Election Violence Education and Resolution (EVER) Project. Ghana.

**Election Violence Monitoring of the Presidential and Parliamentary
Elections, Ghana, 2004**

Submitted by:
Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana)
In collaboration with
Institute for Policy Alternatives (IPA), Tamale, Ghana

Submitted to:
International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES)

February 15, 2005

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Background	2
Identification and mapping of Election Violence ‘Hot Spots’ and Recruitment of Monitors.....	2
Pre-election violence Monitoring.....	3
Election-Day Monitoring.....	4
Post-Election Violence Monitoring	4
Key Findings and Recommendations	5
Conclusion	6

Introduction

The December 7th 2004 Presidential and Parliamentary election was the fourth in a series of successfully held general elections in the Fourth Republic of Ghana. The credibility of election results and their acceptance by contesting parties and candidates, especially in fledgling democracies such as Ghana's, tend to hinge largely on the reports of election observers and monitors. Election violence monitoring is a critical component of election monitoring and observation. Violence and the threat of it can disrupt and even torpedo an election. It can disable a candidate from contention; keep voters from the polling station; destroy legally cast ballots, and more crucially, it can impede or disrupt the exercise of the free will of citizens. Election violence can undermine the very foundation of democratic institutions.

There is a palpable disconnect between the election process and the substantial effort undertaken to mitigate ethnic, religious or political conflicts. As a result, efforts to monitor and or mitigate election specific violence, while advanced in some settings, have not benefited from shared information about best practices or by efforts to design standard practice or behaviour for the varied and important entities involved in the electoral process. The collaborative work between the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) and the Institute for Policy Alternatives (IPA), and funded by IFES in election violence monitoring in the December 2004 general election held in Ghana was geared towards mitigating election violence. As well, working collaboratively with other important entities involved in the electoral process with a view to ensuring peace and stability in the body politic. The background to this process is explained in the following chapter.

Background

In October 2004, the Accra-based Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) agreed with the Tamale-based Institute for Policy Alternatives (IPA) to collaborate on a project to monitor election violence in the three northern regions of Ghana. The IPA was selected by the Center because of its strong presence in Northern Ghana and comfort level with the socio-political, ethno-chieftaincy and religious dynamics of the area. Even though other parts of the country were not entirely devoid of election-related violence, the three Northern regions in particular were much more prone to election violence. There were heightened political rivalries between the two major parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). Also, certain constituencies in the three northern regions have in the past exhibited a higher propensity of election violence, resulting in some instances to loss of lives. The monitoring process started in the month of November 2004 right up to the second week of January 2005.

Identification and mapping of Election Violence 'Hot Spots' and Recruitment of Monitors

Key among IPA's responsibilities in this collaborative exercise was the identification and mapping of election violence 'hot spots' and recruitment and training of monitors. Nine constituencies were identified, the bulk of them located in the Northern region. The three constituencies in the Tamale metropolis, namely Tamale North, Tamale

Central and Tamale South were considered first category of violence prone-areas. Yendi and Salaga were the other towns in northern region considered volatile. Bawku Central in the Upper East region, notorious for election-related violence was among the nine constituencies. Navrongo Central was the other constituency targeted in the Upper East region. Wa Central constituency and the Nadowli West constituency both in the Upper West region were also considered to be volatile.

Thirteen monitors were recruited for a two-day orientation to monitor election violence in the identified constituencies and polling areas. The monitors met stringent criteria of non-partisanship, maturity, good knowledge of areas of deployment and excellent communication skills. The monitors were trained to do a comprehensive desk audit in the pre-election period to document from both the print and electronic media news accounts on incidence of election violence. They also received training to carry out interviews and provide measures to prevent or mitigate the occurrence or violence. Monitors also received training on how to monitor nomination and declaration of candidates, candidates' campaign, polling day processes and post election developments.

With the help of IFES consultants, IPA prepared an election violence checklist to be used by the monitors over the monitoring period. The checklist was designed to collect relevant data such as the source of information, type, location, time, perpetrator, victim and the consequence of election violence.

Pre-election violence Monitoring

The monitoring began on November 6th 2004, a day after the monitors successfully completed the two-day orientation on election violence monitoring right up to close of the campaign on December 6 in nine constituencies in the three regions. During this period, the monitors recorded:

- Twenty seven (27) incidents of a violent nature
- Out of the twenty seven incidents recorded, seven (7) or 20 percent of these are considered to be of very serious nature, where the victims either sustained physical injuries, property loss or in one or two instances, loss of life
- Most of the incidents recorded were between the supporters or sympathizers of the two major parties, National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP). For instance, only three incidents were intra-party, that is, within the NDC, two other incidents involved Independent candidates.
- It is instructive to note that, Yendi, citadel of the Dagbon kingdom was relatively calm. No observable incidence of pre-election violence was reported or observed by the monitors. Security in Yendi was tight and suspicions of potentially explosive situations were appropriately mediated throughout the pre-election period.
- Although Tamale recorded the highest number of incidence of violence, the capacity to manage these incidents and prevent them from escalating was relatively high, credit to the leadership of the major political parties who often work quickly to negotiate normalcy, and the timeliness of security interventions. It is important to note here how the security agencies and the political leadership

has developed mechanisms for communication, sometimes facilitated by myriad of peace-building NGOs in the area, notably the Ghana Network for Peace

The general consensus was that events leading to Election Day in the three regions were said to be calm and generally peaceful in spite of a few serious incidents of a violent nature.

Election Day Monitoring

The atmosphere on Election Day in the nine identified constituencies and most parts of the three regions was generally calm and sanguine. The few unfortunate incidents recorded in some constituencies did not mar the overall positive picture of the conduct of elections and the electoral process. For instance, out of the nine reported incidents in the Salaga constituency in East Gonja, none of them was of any serious nature. In the two constituencies targeted in the Upper West region, Wa Central and Nandowli West, election went on peacefully much to the relief of all the stakeholders. The pre-election political tension turned out to be a bubble. The bitter political rivalry between the official NPP candidate and the Independent candidate (breakaway from NPP) in the Navrongo Central constituency did not manifest itself in the form of election related violence. Equally, the much talked about Dagbon crisis and its possible ramifications in Yendi, the seat of the Dagbon paramountcy, on election-day turned out to be much 'ado about nothing'. No incidence of any consequence was reported.

There were however, a couple of unfortunate incidents worth noting. Even though there was no incidence of any serious nature reported in the three constituencies in the Tamale metropolis, a few worrisome incidents occurred not too distant from the metropolis. Eighteen ballot boxes were allegedly burned in Tolon, a village near Tamale. This no doubt raised the already poisoned political temperature, and in a village called Jakpahi located in the Tolon-Kungubu area, three young men were killed in election related violence. According to eyewitness report, one of the victims was lynched by an enraged group of villagers. Events in Bawku Central were equally troubling. Gunshots was reported around Winamzua polling area; the victim of the resulting gunshot wounds turned out to be a soldier who happened to be one of the security men protecting the NPP candidate, Madam Hawa Yakubu. At Yapei in the West Gonja district, the returning officer was attacked by rampaging mobs and the officer had to seek refuge in Tamale. Clearly, the regrettable events described here are not consistent with the conduct of free and fair, and above all peaceful elections. These isolated incidents no doubt cast a blot on the electoral process. The near-explosive situation in Tamale arising from the detention and subsequent death of Alhaji Issa Mobila in military custody and other post-election incidents are elaborated in below.

Post-Election Violence Monitoring

Our monitors continued to monitor the situation at constituency counting centres following Election Day. And as with Pre-Election period, throughout the Post-Election period, 8-21 December, the monitors met with the police and other stakeholders to learn of incidents of electoral violence.

The most notable incident of very grave nature occurred in Tamale. The detention and subsequent death of Alhaji Issa Mobila in military custody caused a near-explosive situation in Tamale and its environs. His arrest was occasioned by an alleged shooting incident in Warzehi around Saka Saka, a suburb of Tamale a day after the election, that is, the night of December 8. According to the BBC's Focus on Africa, the Police suspected the CPP Regional Party Chairman Alhaji Issa Mobila in connection with the Warzehi shooting and searched his house in his absence. Upon hearing of the search, he reported himself to the police who handed him over to the military. On the morning of Friday December 10, the military reported his death. A pathologist's post-mortem confirmed the worst fears of most Ghanaians that Alhaji Issa Mobila died of unnatural causes. Alhaji Issa Mobila was a key local opinion leader, Chairman of the Ghana Private Transport Union based at the Bolgatanga Station in Tamale and Regional Chairman of the Convention Peoples Party. But for the security measures instituted in the Tamale metropolis, the town would have been plunged in chaos.

All the other serious incidents recorded were outside the nine identified constituencies. The events at Yapei where organised youth vandalised ballot boxes at the collating centre and rendered impossible the declaration of both presidential and parliamentary election results was not only an affront to democracy but sheer criminality that ought to be severely punished. A similar pattern of electoral violence was repeated in the Tolon and Zabzugu-Tatale constituencies all in the northern region. It is important to note that the Electoral Commission declared the results of all the three constituencies two weeks after the presidential and parliamentary elections. Incidentally, the candidates of the main opposition party, the NDC, won in all three constituencies.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Close to fifty incidents were recorded during the period under review. Out of this, two incidents stand out prominently. In Bawku Central, a shooting incident occurred where a security officer sustained injuries in the arm and, in Tamale Alhaji Issa Mobila died in military custody. In both cases aggrieved parties have cried foul. In the case of Bawku Central, the defeated NPP candidate Hawa Yakubu has called for investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators of the violent act. In Tamale the parents of the late Alhaji Mobila, supporters of NDC and members of his own party, the Convention Peoples' Party (CCP) have called for justice. Regarding the Mobila case, the Police and Military authorities have responded by constituting boards of inquiry. A strong and positive response by the government to these breaches of human rights will enhance the popular perception of good governance and respect of the rule of law in Ghana.

Recommendations:

- Pre-Election Violence Monitoring should start earlier - two-three months before elections to include a greater part of the campaign process
- Participants in the monitoring exercise should be involved in the design of the training manual
- Conflict resolution should be made a critical component of election violence monitoring

- Monitors should coordinate with key stakeholders, especially the security officers, chiefs and opinion leaders
- Education of voters on the electoral procedure, the mandate of the Electoral Commission, should be taken seriously. This will presumably reduce the high incidence of spoilt ballot papers.
- Conduct intensive pre-election monitoring to identify flash points and necessary mediating action should be taken to sort out outstanding issues.
- Accreditation badges of Monitors should be made available before they are deployed to the field to ensure that they receive the necessary cooperation.

Lessons Learnt:

- In areas where community leaders took a proactive role in encouraging peace there was peace.
- In areas that had sufficient security presence a sense of peace prevailed.
- Any peace building efforts should include as many stakeholders as possible to be successful. When all stakeholders are not involved these efforts tend to be futile.

Conclusion

Election Violence Monitoring is not an end in itself but a means to finding a lasting solution to underlying problems that give cause to acts of violence. The overarching objective of election violence monitoring is to build enduring peace through early-warning and sustained monitoring. This exercise in the nine constituencies in the three regions in Northern Ghana is the first of its kind and it is hoped this will create the basis for future collaborative work between the Center for Democratic Development (CDD), Institute for Policy Alternatives (IPA) and International Foundation of Election Systems (IFES) in furthering the quest for peace and seeking lasting solutions to some of the seemingly intractable problems.

Contrary to the intense speculation and public perceptions about heightened political rivalries in Northern Ghana, the monitoring of election violence in volatile constituencies in the three Northern Regions of Ghana have yielded a relatively small volume of violent incidents.

Despite the intense rivalry between the supporters of the two major parties which sometimes manifest in violent clashes, the enduring capacity of the people in these communities to tolerate one another, has contributed immeasurably in calming and stabilizing the political atmosphere. The work of the security agencies in ensuring peace cannot be gainsaid. Ultimately, the commitment of the NPP government in untangling the circumstances that led to the death of the late Alhaji Issa Mobila and resolving the Dagbon crisis will go a long way in advancing the cause of peace in Northern region. Nor should the government allow the Bawku Central incident to fester without thorough investigation.